

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 04741 280718Z
ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 JUSE-00 AID-05 ACDA-12
CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-14 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08
NRC-07 SOE-02 DODE-00 DOE-15 SS-15 SP-02 CEQ-01
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R 280640Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0487
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
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UNCLAS NEW DELHI 4741

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MNUC, ENGR, IN, US
SUBJECT: ANOTHER EDITORIAL ON TARAPUR

HERE WITH THE TEXT OF THE STATESMAN'S MARCH 28 EDITORIAL,
"FUTURE OF TARAPUR".

BEGIN TEXT:

THE FUEL SHIPMENT FOR THE TARAPUR ATOMIC POWER
STATION, PUBLICLY PROMISED BY PRESIDENT CARTER DURING
HIS VISIT TO INDIA NEARLY THREE MONTHS AGO, HAS NOT
YET BEEN MADE. THE CONSIGNMENT, OF 7.6 TONNES OF
ENRICHED URANIUM, WOULD BE PART OF FUEL SUPPLIES THE
UNITED STATES UNDERTOOK TO MAKE FOR THE TARAPUR
PLANT; THE PRESIDENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT WAS ONLY AN
INDICATION THAT THE UNCERTAINTY THAT HAD ARISEN OVER
FULFILMENT OF THIS OBLIGATION WOULD BE REMOVED, AT
LEAST IN RESPECT OF A SHIPMENT THAT HAD LONG BEEN
OVERDUE. THE AMOUNT WAS REQUESTED WELL OVER A YEAR AGO,
AND SHOULD HAVE ARRIVED LAST SEPTEMBER. IN FACT,
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FURTHER AMOUNTS ARE NOW OVERDUE. IT WAS QUITESOME TIME
AFTER MR. CARTER'S RETURN TO WASHINGTON THAT THE
ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDED TO THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY
COMMISSION THAT THE 7.6-TONNE SHIPMENT BE AUTHORIZED.
THE COMMISSION TOOK ITS OWN TIME EVEN TO LOOK INTO THE
MATTER. TWO OF ITS FOUR MEMBERS MET ON MARCH 16, BUT
COULD NOT DECIDE BECAUSE THE OTHER TWO WERE NOT PRESENT.

THOUGH THE COMMISSION'S STAFF SUPPORTED THE ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION FOR PROMPT RELEASE OF THE SHIPMENT, IT WAS NOT EVEN CLEAR WHETHER A DECISION WOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON OBJECTIONS RAISED BY THREE "ENVIRONMENTALIST" GROUPS. THE POSSIBILITY THUS AROSE OF CONSIDERABLE FURTHER DELAY.

IT IS TRUE, THOUGH WAS NOT STATED WHEN MR. CARTER MADE HIS ANNOUNCEMENT IN NEW DELHI, THAT EVEN THE PRESIDENT CAN ONLY MAKE A RECOMMENDATION, THAT IT IS FOR THE NRC TO TAKE A FINAL DECISION ON ANY EXPORT OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL. BUT IT MAY BE DOUBTED WHETHER THE PRESIDENT'S EFFECTIVE AUTHORITY IS REALLY SO LIMITED. IF IT IS, NOT MUCH IMPORTANCE CAN BE ATTACHED TO HIS RECENT ASSURANCE THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD REMAIN "A RELIABLE SUPPLIER." OF NUCLEAR FUEL. OF COURSE, HE INDICATED THAT SUPPLIES WOULD BE MADE ONLY TO THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH SHARED THE USA'S CONCERN TO CHECK THE SPREAD OF THE BOMB; AND INDIA'S REFUSAL TO SIGN THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY OR ACCEPT "FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS" MIGHT BE SUSPECT IN AMERICAN EYES. BUT THAT CANNOT JUSTIFY REPUDIATION OF CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS; EVEN THE NEW U.S. LAW, WHICH MAKES SUPPLIES OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL FROM THE UNITED STATES CONDITIONAL ON SUCH SAFEGUARDS, CANNOT INVALIDATE EXISTING COMMITMENTS.

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MR. MORARJI DESAI WAS LESS THAN ACCURATE IN SUGGESTING THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT ON TARAPUR IN RESPECT OF SPENT FUEL; THOUGH IT HAS BEEN UNREASONABLY OBSTRUCTIVE IN THIS MATTER, IT HAS NOT VIOLATED ANY SPECIFIC PROVISION OF THE AGREEMENT. BUT, CONSIDERING THE DELAYS AND UNCERTAINTIES IN FRESH FUEL SUPPLIES, IT CAN BE SAID TO HAVE ALREADY FAILED TO FULFIL CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS; REFUSAL TO SUPPLY MORE FUEL, EVEN ON THE PLEA OF NEW LEGAL RESTRICTION, WOULD AMOUNT TO OPEN VIOLATION. MR. DESAI SEEMS STILL TO HOPE THAT THE MATTER WILL BE RESOLVED WHEN HE VISITS WASHINGTON. BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER FURTHER SUPPLIES WILL BE AVAILABLE DURING THE 18-MONTH PERIOD BEFORE THE NEW U.S. ACT COMES INTO EFFECT. AN ALTERNATIVE WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND TO KEEP TARAPUR GOING. THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INDIGENOUS TECHNICAL SOLUTION HAS BEEN MENTIONED; WHETHER THE SEARCH FOR IT IS BEING CONDUCTED WITH SUFFICIENT VIGOUR, SENSE OF URGENCY AND EXECUTIVE SUPPORT IS, HOWEVER, LESS THAN CERTAIN. END TEXT.
GOHEEN

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